Jonah Thompson's Book.

MERCY

Covering the Judgment Seat;

AND

Life and Light

Triumphing Over

Death and Darkneſs:

IN THE

Lord's Tender Viſitation, and Wonderful Deliverance, of One that Sat in Darkneſs, and in the Region and Shadow of Death.

Witneſſed Unto

In Certain EPISTLES and PAPERS of Living Experience.

By Richard Claridge.

LONDON, Printed and Sold by *T. Sowle*, in *White-Hart-Court*, in *Gracious-Street*, 1700.

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Sarah Thompson's Book.

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The PREFACE,

To the Honest-hearted *Readers*, that sincerely Desire to be Truly Informed about the Great and Weighty *Matters* of *Religion*, and to know *Peace* with *God*, through Jesus Christ, who is the *Light* and *Saviour* of the World, *John* 9. 5. 1 *John* 4. 14.

WE Live in an Age of High Notions and Speculations about Matters of Religion, *and according to the Various Apprehensions that Many have thereof, in their Ignorance of the* True God, *and* Jesus Christ *whom he hath sent a Light into the World, they have Set up this and the other Way and Mode of* Worship, *in Opposition and Contradiction to one another; Each pretending* Scripture *for their several Ways; but Wresting rather than Interpreting of it, both to the Dishonour of God, and Hurt of themselves and others. So that they have laid a* Stumbling-Block, *by this Diversity of Opinions, not only in the Way of the* Jew, Mahometan *and* Gentile, *but of many also under the Profession of* Christianity. *Whereby, as the Former have been Confirmed and Hardned in their* Judaism, Turcism, *and* Paganism; *so the Latter, have*

some of them proved Atheists, Anti-scripturists, *and Openly* Profane; *others have taken up with the* Traditions *and* Inventions *of Men, instead of the* Commandments *and* Ordinances *of the Lord; and a Third Sort, who are* Honest-hearted, *and have at times sincere Desires in their Souls after the Lord, are so Distracted in their Minds through the Subtilty of the* Enemy, *who is at Work in a Mysterious Manner, under the Various Forms of* Humanely-Devised Worships, *that they know not at present what to Joyn to, or where to Fix, that they might find a* True Resting Place *for their* Souls.

For the Awakening therefore of All that are a Sleep in Sin, *or* Empty Forms of Profession, *and for the Information of all such, but more Especially of the Sincere-hearted Ones, whom the Lord in Measure may have Awakened, and in whom he may have raised Earnest Breathings and Desires at certain Times and Seasons, in this Day of his Tender Visitation, after the Enjoyment of Himself; the Exhortation from the Lord unto Sleepy Sinners, and Secure Formalists, is,* Awake ye that Sleep, and Arise from the Dead, that Christ may give you Light and Life. Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the Unrighteous Man his Thoughts; and let him Return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will Abundantly Pardon. *Isai.* 55. 7.

And

And to the Awakened, Seeking Ones, in the Sincerity and Humility of their Hearts, it is the Word of the Lord, Ye are not far from the Kingdom of God; My Righteousness is near, and my Salvation is gone forth, Isai. 51. 5. Come unto me, *saith Christ Jesus*, All ye that Labour, and are Heavy Laden, and I will give you *Rest*. Take my *Yoke* upon you, and Learn of me, for I am Meek and Lowly in Heart, and ye shall find *Rest* unto your Souls, *Mat.* 11. 28, 29.

You will say perhaps, This is Comfortable News indeed, and thou bringest us Glad Tidings of Good Things; But how shall we do to be made Enjoyers of them? O that we knew where we might find him, whom our Souls Desire! That we might come even to his Seat!

Answ. *Having Obtained Mercy at the Hand of God, to be Faithful, I still Declare unto you, Where and How you shall find him. Turn to the Light Within, to Christ Jesus in his* Inward Appearance *in your Hearts, who said,* I am the Light of the World; he that Followeth me, shall not Walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life, *John* 8. 12. *Be not Faithless, but Believing: I know the* Enemy *of your Souls will do what he can to Discourage and Hinder you; for he hath many Instruments at Work, to Misrepresent and Aspers the*

Eternal

Eternal Truth of God, *and the Faithful Followers of* Christ. *The* Scribes *and* Pharisees, *the* Priests *and* Levites, *were Busie and Industrious Adversaries in Ages and Generations past, and so are their Successors now; notwithstanding their vain Pretences to* Antiquity, Universality *and* Consent; *and their Lying Words, saying,* The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are these, *Jer.* 7. 4. *But, O ye Tender and Enquiring Ones, I Beseech you not to follow the Voice of* Strangers *and* Hirelings, *who come to Steal, Kill and Destroy: But hearken to the* Voice of Christ Jesus *in your own Souls, who said,* I am come that they might have Life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his Life for the Sheep, *John* 10. 10, 11. *Of whom it was Prophesied,* Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong Hand, and his Arm shall Rule for him: Behold, his Reward is with him, and his Work before him. He shall feed his Flock like a Shepherd; he shall gather the Lambs with his Arm, and carry them in his Bosom, and shall gently lead those that are great with Young, *Isai.* 40. 10, 11. *Do not conceive of Him, as too many in their Ignorance do; that he is a Saviour* Afar off, *and not* Nigh at Hand. The Righteousness which is of Faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in your Hearts, Who shall Ascend into Heaven? That is, to bring Christ down from Above. Or who shall Descend into the Deep? That is, to bring up Christ again from the Dead. But what saith it? The Word is Nigh thee, even in thy Heart; that is the Word of Faith which we Preach, *Rom.* 10 6, 7, 8.

Now, in Directing People to the Word of Faith, in their Hearts, *or the* Light Within, *which are both One in Nature,* tho' *Differing in Name; we do not thereby make void the Outward Appearance of Christ in the Prepared Body, wherein he came to Do and Suffer the Will of God, for the Redemption*

and

and Salvation of loſt Mankind; But as any Man or Woman comes to Believe in the Light Within, *and to receive with Meekneſs the* Ingrafted Word; *ſo we Teſtifie from our own Experience, that they will be but to have an higher Eſteem for the Outward Appearance of Chriſt, than ever they could have before. For the Experimental Knowledge of the Myſtery, Enhanſes the Worth and Value of the Hiſtory.*

You ſee then where you may Meet with Him whom your Souls deſire; namely, Within you: For the Kingdom of God is Within you, *Luke* 17. 21. And Chriſt in you, *is* the Hope of Glory, *Col.* 1. 27.

The other part of your Enquiry, reſpects the Way or Manner of your Coming to Meet with him, and how you may be made Enjoyers of his Living Preſence, I anſwer, Not by Outward Obſervation, and Bodily Exerciſe, which profiteth little; but by Inward Waiting, and Applying of the Mind to the Light of Chriſt *in your own Conſcience, which he hath commanded you to mind there, and to go before you; and, as you yield Faithful Obedience to it, to guide you out of Darkneſs into his Marvellous Light:* For if ye believe in the Light, ye ſhall be the Children of the Light, *ſee John* 12. 36. *And come to Witneſs that Peace with God, that Quietneſs and Aſſurance in your own Boſoms, which is the Work and Effect of* Righteouſneſs; *nay, it cannot be attained any other way. For whoever would come to enjoy True Peace with God, he muſt be made Righteous; and that by a Righteouſneſs wrought* in him *by the Spirit of Chriſt, without whom he can do nothing, acceptable to the Lord; and not meerly by a Righteouſneſs* without him. *We can ſet our Seals to the Doctrine of* Imputation, *as 'tis plainly Stated in the* Scriptures of Truth; *that is, when Man is Actualy Poſſeſſed of the* Righteouſneſs *which is ſaid to be Imputed to him; but not as ſome Perſons have Diſguiſed it, who, under Pretence of Exalting* Chriſt's Righteouſneſs *Without them, have made the* Work of the Holy Spirit in Sanctification,

Sanctification, *no part of the Sinners* Justification: *Whereas the Formation of Christ in the Soul, is so absolutely Necessary, and that* Formation *is* Sanctification, *that without it, No Man shall Inherit the Kingdom of God.*

Turn in, Turn in, to the Fountain of Life, All ye that are a Thirst for God, and draw Water out of the Well of Salvation! Whosoever drinketh, *saith Christ Jesus,* of the Water that I shall give him, shall never Thirst: But the Water that I shall give him, shall be In Him a Well of Water springing up into Everlasting Life, *John* 4. 14. *When you come to drink of this Pure Water, and know it to be* In You, *as Christ hath Testified, you will then see what Muddy Streams and Broken Cisterns you went to in Times past; Yea, you will be sensible, that* No Notions, No Speculations, No Forms, Nor Worships of Man, *in his own Will and Time, are of any Value; for as you are Made Partakers of the* Holy Life of Jesus, *so you will see* Death *in every such Device and Imagination: your Eyes will then be opened* in the Light, *to see the* Darkness and Emptiness *of the* Shadowy and Unsatisfactory Dispensation *you were sometimes under.*

To

The First EPISTLE.

To my Honoured Father,

William Claridge.

Honoured Father!

LET not my Using the Singular Number, of *Thou* and *Thee*, be offensive to thee; for 'tis Scripture-Language to a Single Person, and according the Right Rules of *Grammar* in all Tongues and Languages: So that if we would Speak or Write truly and properly to a Single Person, and not fallly or flatteringly, we ought to use the Singular Number, *Thou* and *Thee*, and not the Plural, *You*. I do confess, I have not used this plain and proper way of Speaking and Writing formerly; but the Lord having Convinced me of his Blessed *Light* and *Truth*, as 'tis own'd and receiv'd by the People (called *Quakers*) and turn'd me from *Darkness to Light*, and from the *Power of Satan unto God*, and holpen me to take up the *Cross of Christ*, the *Power of God*, whereby I am in some measure Crucified to the World, and the World unto me; so that the Life that I now live, is by the Faith of the Son of God, who died for *All Men*, and hath given a Manifestation of his Spirit unto me, and *Every Man* and *Woman* in the World, to profit withal; I dare not now joyn with the World in any thing that is contrary to *Truth*; either in their Men-made Faiths, or Men-made Worships, or in their Sinful Practices, Customs and Usages, or in their Civil Ceremonies and Complements, as they Call them: But my Faith is the *Gift of God*, which purifieth my Heart, and inableth me to overcome the World; and my Worship is that which God alone is the Author of, a *Spiritual Worship*, and the Praise of it is of himself, and not of Men. Neither dare I,

being delivered from *my Former Blindneſs*, have any more to do with the Unfruitful Works of Darkneſs, but muſt Reprove them.

For a long time I have been as a *loſt Sheep* going aſtray, wandring up and down from Mountain to Hill, and from Hill to Mountain, and ſeeking Reſt in this and the other Form of Men-made Worſhip; for one ſaid, *Lo, here is Chriſt*; and another ſaid, *Lo, there is Chriſt*; pretending he was either in the Deſarts, or in the ſecret Chambers of Humane Invenrions: But after Tryal, I found he was not there; For my thirſty Soul could meet with no Water of Life in their broken Ciſterns, to refreſh it; my hungry Soul could find no Living Bread in their Baskets, to ſatisfie and ſuſtain it. All their Forms were Shadows without the Subſtance, Shells without the Kernel, Leaves without Fruit, Clouds without Rain, Miſerable Comforters to my Sorrowfull Soul, adding Affliction to my Trouble; but adminiſtring no true and laſting Eaſe and Refreſhment. And when I was thus Wandring and Seeking in great Diſtreſs and Perplexity, and Cries ſprung up in my Soul to the Lord for Help: The Lord was pleaſed to Ariſe, and Reveal his Everlaſting Arm, and ſend Redemption unto my Soul. For Him, whom I had been ſeeking *Without and Abroad*, I found to be *Within and at Home*. The Word of Life, which I wanted, was Nigh me, *in my Heart, and in my Mouth*; and as *Jacob* ſaid, *Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not*, Gen. 28. 16. So can I, That the Lord was *In me*, tho' I was ignorant thereof, and was looking for him *Without me*. Chriſt was *Within me*, in my Heart and Conſcience; The Seed of the Heavenly Kingdom was there; the *True Light* ſhone in my Darkneſs, the Spirit of Truth convinced me, tho' I regarded it not.

But now, *God, who commanded the Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs, hath ſhined in* my Heart, *to give* me *the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Cor. 4. 6. And the Grace of God, which hath been Exceeding abundant towards me, hath inabled me to Walk in it, and yield Obedience to it, according to my Meaſure, in the due and patient Exerciſe of his own Heavenly Gift.

Thus

Thus hath the Lord at last in his Infinite Mercy to my Soul, brought a *Poor Dark Creature* to the *Glorious Light* of his Beloved Son, and to the Brightness of his Rising, and caused a *Stray Sheep* to Return to the *Shepherd and Bishop* of our Souls. And being thus wonderfully Turn'd to Christ, *the true Light*, my Soul earnestly desireth, That *All Mankind*, and particularly thou, *My dear Father*, may be turn'd to him also; And may effectually know the great Salvation that comes by Jesus who is come to Save us from our Sins, and to Redeem us from *all Iniquity*, and Purifie us unto himself a Peculiar People, Zealous of good Works: Which, as we come to know, we shall be Witnesses indeed of the *New Creation*, and of the *New Birth*, without which, whatsoever Forms we are under, or Pretensions we may make to *Christianity*, we cannot See the Kingdom of God. For thus said Christ to *Nicodemus*, *Except a Man be Born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God*, John 3. 3. And, *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be Born again*, vers. 7. Now since this *New Birth* is of Absolute Necessity to be Known, by every one that hopes to Enter into the Kingdom of God; and yet is a *Riddle* to the greatest Part of Persons under the Profession of *Christianity*; the Lord having made me a Witness of it, I feel his Drawings upon me, in the tender Love of Christ, to Unfold it unto others.

The *New Birth* then, is a Being *Born again, not of Corruptible Seed, but of Incorruptible, by the Word of God, which Liveth and Abideth for ever*, 1 Pet. 1. 23. There are *Two Seeds* and *Two Births*, according to the Nature of the several *Seeds*; there is the *Corrupt*, and the *Incorruptible Seed*; and there is the *Old Birth*, and the *New*. The *Corrupt Seed*, from whence the *Old Birth* proceeds, is that which the Envious One sows; and both this *Seed* and *Birth* tend unto Death.

Now this is the State wherein all Men are by Nature, the *Corrupt Seed* lives and rules in them, and brings forth the Fruits of Unrighteousness, as *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*, 1 John 2. 16. Together with that long Train of Sins, mentioned by the Apostle, *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, 21. Which they who Commit, shall not Inherit the Kingdom of God; for *He will Render to every Man according to his Deeds; to them, who by Patient Continuance in Well-doing, Seek, for Glory, and Honour, and*

Immortality, Eternal Life: But unto them that are Contentious, and do not obey the Truth, *but obey Unrighteousness; Indignation and Wrath,* Rom. 2. 6, 7, 8. *The Wages of Sin is Death,* Rom. 6. 23. *Except you Repent, ye shall all likewise Perish,* Luke 13. 3, 5. *If ye Believe not that I am He, ye shall Die in your Sins,* John 8. 24. *He that Believeth not the Son, shall not See Life; but the Wrath of God Abideth on him,* John 3. 36.

But the *Incorruptible Seed, Christ Jesus,* Gal. 3 16. The *Word of the Kingdom,* Mat. 13. 19. from whence the *New Birth* Comes, is both *Seed* and *Sower* himself; and he Sows it in the Hearts of *All Mankind,* and would have All to keep it, and bring forth Fruit with Patience. But some are like the *Way-side,* which Receive the *Seed*; and the Devil cometh and taketh the Word out of their Hearts, lest they should Believe and be Saved. Some are like the *Stony-Places,* that having no Root, do only Believe for a while, and in Time of Temptation Fall away. Others are like *Thorns,* which when they have heard the Word, go forth, and are choaked with the Cares, or Riches, or Pleasures of this Life, and bring no Fruit to *Perfection.* And some are like the *Good Ground,* which in an Honest and Good Heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit with Patience, some an hundred Fold, some sixty, some thirty: Compare *Mat.* 13. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. with *Luke* 8. 12, 13, 14, 15.

The *Incorruptible Seed* is sown in *All,* not one Man or Woman excepted; but we see the Reason why it doth not grow to Maturity in *All,* namely, *Because the Devil catcheth away that which was sown in the Heart;* Or, *it wants good Rooting;* Or *is choaked by the Cares, or Riches, or Pleasures of this Life.* So that it is the Honest and Good Heart only which receives and keeps it, and so becomes Fruitful. And this is the *New Birth,* or a being *Born again of Incorruptible Seed,* when the *Word of God* (I mean *Christ Jesus,* whose *Name* is called, *The Word of God,* Rev. 19. 13.) Is received, and the word *Preached* is mixed with *Faith* in the Hearts of them that hear it, whereby a Renovation in the Spirit of their Minds is Experienced. The Effect of which Renewing, is manifested by the Fruits of the Spirit; For where Christ is formed in the Soul, *Old things are past away, and all things are become New,* 2 Cor. 5. 17. *There is a Putting off concerning the former Conversation, the Old Man, which is Corrupt, according to the deceitful*

ceitful Lusts; And the New Man is put on, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness, Ephes. 4. 22, 24. And where this *Putting off the Old Man*, and *Putting on the New*, is Known and Experienced, there is a True Regeneration: And such as know this, are True Believers in Christ, and shall not come into Condemnation, but are passed from Death to Life. As to their former Transgressions, they are freely forgiven through Christ, the great and alone Propitiation, upon Repentance from Dead Works, and Faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Their past Iniquities are Forgiven, and their Sins are Covered, as though they never had been Committed. And this is *Justification from the Guilt of Sins that are past, through the Forbearance of God in Christ Jesus, whom he hath set forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood*, Rom. 3. 25. So that all those who are True Believers, are *New Creatures*; They are *Washed, Sanctified, and Justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. 6. 11. And *unto them there is no Condemnation; for they are in Christ Jesus, and Walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit*, Rom. 8. 1. These are the Sons and Daughters of the Lord God Almighty; for they *have Received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father*, Rom. 8. 15. *The Spirit it self beareth Witness with their Spirits, that they are the Children of God; and if Children, then Heirs, Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ*, verf. 16, 17. And by these, Pure and Acceptable Service is performed to God, through Jesus Christ.

Now if ever thou Comest to Know the *New Birth*, thou must Know a *Spiritual Travel*: There is a Sight and Sense of Sin, and Groaning to be Delivered, before the *Man-Child is Born*. Therefore, *my Dear Father*, Bring, I humbly Intreat thee, Every Thought, Word and Action, to the *Light of Christ* in thy own Conscience, and the *Light* will shew thee what they are, and will Reprove the Evil, and Condemn the Unjust; And as thou Turnest at *Wisdom's Reproof*, so God *will pour out his Spirit unto thee, and will make known his Words unto thee*, Prov. 1. 23. Turn therefore even now to the Lord; for he is a God, *who would have all Men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the Truth*, 1 Tim. 2. 4. *He pardoneth Iniquity, and passeth by the Transgression of the Remnant of his Heritage; he retaineth not his*

Anger

Anger for ever, because he delighteth in Mercy, Mic. 7. 18. *To day therefore hear his Voice*, Heb. 3. 7. *For behold, now is the Accepted Time; behold, now is the Day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. 6. 2. Consult no longer with Flesh and Blood, but Take up thy Cross and follow Christ. There is no coming to the Father, but by the Son; *And him that cometh unto me*, saith the Son, *I will in no wise cast out*, John 6. 37. Thus Commending thee to *God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to Build* thee *up, and Give* thee *an Inheritance among all them which are Sanctified*, Acts 20. 32.

I Remain,

Thy Dutiful and Affectionate Son,

Earnestly Desiring thine Eternal Welfare,

George's Court, near Elck's Hall, London, the 7th of the 10th Month, 1697.

Richard Claridge.

The

The Second EPISTLE.

TO

Moſes Sergeant of *Red-ditch* In *Worceſterſhire*,

Formerly a *Preacher* among the *Baptiſts*, and Member of the Congregation Meeting at *Bromeſgrove*, in the ſaid *County*, (whereof I alſo ſometimes was) and lately come forth in a Publick Teſtimony to God's Bleſſed *Light* and *Truth*.

My Dear Friend,

HAving heard by many Faithful Friends, and particularly by *Thomas Sheward*, *Mary Gulſon*, *John Leech* and *John Bewater*, of thy Faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and Obedience thereunto; my Heart within me was right Glad at the Report thereof, and doth even now leap for Joy, in a Fellow-ſenſe of the Lord's Mercy both to thee and me: For he hath done Wonderful Things for us, in Turning us from *Darkneſs* to the *True Light*, Chriſt Jeſus; from *Error*, to his *Eternal Truth*; and from the *Miniſtration of the Letter*, to the *Miniſtration of the Spirit*; wherein, his *Judgments* have been ſet before us, and *Righteouſneſs* and *Peace* have kiſſed each other. And now his own Work doth Praiſe him, and Speak of his Kingdom and Glory, and Talk of his Power, which he hath made known to a Remnant; who were ſometime under the Dominion of *other Lords*, but now by

by Him only they will make Mention of his *Excellent Name*, and Declare the great things he hath done for their Souls. *For in* Judah *is God known, and his Name is great in* Iſrael; *in* Salem *alſo is his Tabernacle, and his Dwelling-place in* Sion. *There brake he the Arrows of the Bow, the Shield, and the Sword, and the Battle*, Pſal. 76. 1, 2, 3. *He ſtood and meaſured the Earth; he beheld, and drove aſunder the Nations; the High Mountains were ſcattered at his Preſence, and the* Strong *Hills do Bow* before him. *The Tents of* Cuſhan *were in Affliction, and the Curtains of the Land of* Midian *did Tremble*, Hab. 3. 6, 7. But, behold now *the Glory of the Lord covereth the Heaven, and the Earth is full of his Praiſe. For he hath Exalted the Horn of his People, and ſubdued their Enemies* within, *and ſhewn them the Joy of his Salvation: Therefore the Redeemed of the Lord Praiſe and Magnifie his Name; for his Name alone is Excellent, and his Glory is above Heaven and Earth.*

The Myſtery that was Hid from us *ſo long*, while we were Clouded with Outward Forms, and the Thick Vail of Dark Imaginations was upon our Minds, through the Infinite Mercy of our God, is now meaſurably made known unto us, by the Powerful Riſing of his *Glorious Light* out of our Obſcurity; which though it ſhone in Days paſt in our Dark Hearts, and was *Nigh* to us for our Leader and Commander; Yet we comprehended it not, nor ſubjected unto it. O the Wonderful Patience and Long-Suffering of our God, who did not ſhut up his Loving-Kindneſs in Diſpleaſure, but Waited upon us *ſo Many Years* to be Gracious! Therefore doth my Soul Bow down before the Lord, and Tremble at his Preſence; for 'tis his own Almighty Arm that hath done this, and it is Marvellous in mine Eyes. The Remembrance of his Mercy is Sweet, and Imprints an Holy Awe and Dread upon me; and in a Lively Senſe thereof, and of his Strength and Power, which I Feel and Witneſs *Nigh* to Help me, as I Wait upon him in the *Silence of all Fleſh*, I am *Travailing on* towards that *Perfection of Reſt*, which is Prepared for the People of God.

But when I Look back upon my *Former State*, when I was Dead in Sins and Treſpaſſes, and Lived a Life of Alienation from the Life of God, And when Dry Notions and Empty Forms, Images without Life, Prevailed, Sorrow and Heavineſs

Heavineſs Take Hold upon me, and Grief poſſeſseth my Reins and my Heart. For if the Lord had then Cut me off, *Weeping and Wailing, and Gnaſhing of Teeth*, might have been my Portion for Evermore. But *O the Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Height of the Love of God in Chriſt Jeſus, which paſſeth Knowledge!* Mercy reſoyced againſt Judgment, and Pity triumphed over Miſery: So I was not given over unto Death, for my Time was the Time of Love. The witneſs of God began to ariſe in my Conſcience, and I had ſome Convictions of Sin, of Righteouſneſs and Judgment: For I do believe the *Spirit of Truth* was then at Work in my Heart, to Work out Sin and Tranſgreſſion, and to make the Inſide of the *Cup and Platter clean*, that I might be a Choſen Veſſel, fit for my Maſter's uſe; but I was not Obedient to the *Guide* of my Soul, as I ought to have been; I was not *Still* and *Silent* before him, Waiting to receive only from him; But Rebellion took place, and I haſtened in my own Will and Wiſdom, and ſo running before my *Leader*, I forſook the *Covenant* of my God, and ran from *One Empty Form* to Another, Embracing meer Shadows inſtead of the true Subſtance.

This was my Caſe, when I quitted that *Publick Station* which I once had in the *Church* of *England*, ſo called, and fell in with the People of the *Baptized Perſwaſion*; who gave me great Expectations from their *Way* of Worſhip affirming it to be *Pure, Primitive* and *Apoſtolical*; and I was Glad therein for a Seaſon, thinking verily it had been ſo; and thereupon I Preached up *Outward Baptiſm* (having been *Plunged* my ſelf into the Water) and the *Outward Supper*, as the Ordinances and Inſtitutions of *Chriſt* Now in Force, (as I then thought) and Argued for them upon all Occaſions, with great Zeal and Earneſtneſs: But this was a blind and ignorant Zeal, and I could meet with no Subſtantial Peace or Satisfaction to my Soul, either in my Contending for, or Partaking of them. For though I Eſteemed them Glorious in their Time, yet they were long ſince Annulled, in Point of Obligation: And I found them to be but *Wells* without *Water*, and *Forms* without the *Power*, even the Graves and Monuments of the Dead, to thoſe that ſeek the Living among them. For the Lord was pleaſed to ſhew me, by his *Inſhining Light*, how far I had taken of the Fruit that

grew upon the *Tree of Knowledge*, whereof he forbad Man to eat, saying, *In the Day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*; and I had sad Experience of this, by the Effects it produced; For though *Death* had some Check for a time, during my first Awakenings; yet through Disobedience to the *Word of Life*, Death gradually prevailed upon me again, and I became a Captive to it. This I write with respect to my *Inward State*, while I was a *Preacher* among the *Baptists*; for my Outward Conversation among Men, was by the Lord's Secret Power, Blessed be his holy *Name*, preserved clean of all gross Immorality.

Now under *Death's Reign*, I was fit for Nothing but Lifeless Forms; and there I continued, like the Man that was among the *Tombs* and *Sepulchres*, till the **Seed of Life** began to Move and Stir in me, and to Struggle and Work for my Deliverance from under Death's Oppression. And as this stirr'd and strove in me, and I was helped by the Lord to *Give up* (tho' but a little) *in Obedience to it*, I began to feel its Virtue, and my Heart was tendered and broken; and my Cry ascended to the Lord, *O Lord, send Redemption in thy Seed, unto my Soul! Put down the Mighty from its Seat, and Exalt that of Low Degree: Let not the Bruised Reed be broken, nor the Smoaking Flax be quenched, but send forth Judgment unto Victory!* And the Lord, in his great Mercy, heard my Cry, and arose for my Help, and brought forth his *Chosen* with Joy, and his *Anointed* with Gladness.

And now, as I felt *Life* to Spring a little in me; so *Death* began to come upon all Outward Forms and Administrations, which were taken up and used in the Fleshly Wisdom of Man; and I durst not Touch, nor Taste, nor Handle any more of them; for the *Time of Reformation was come*, and the *Old Heavens* and *Earth*, wherein those Shadows had their Beginning, Growth and Continuance, were to *Vanish away*; and the Lord would *create a New Heaven and a New Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness*. For I was made Sensible, by his *Living Power*, that the Lord was come to his *Temple*, to Purge every Pot and Vessel thereof, and to *Create a clean Heart, and to Renew a right Spirit within me*; that so I might Worship him *in Spirit* and *Truth*, and offer up unto him an *Offering in Righteousness*; which I could not do, until the Great **Refiner** had Purified me from my *Dross*, and Refined me from my *Tin*.

And

And now my *Belly Trembled*, and my *Lips Quivered* at the *presence of the Lord*, whose Brightness was as the Light, and Burning Coals went forth at his Feet, to discover and burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire, and to gather the Wheat into his Garner. For now the very Foundations were discovered, and *Jerusalem* was searched, as it were with Candles; and the *Light* of the Lord shewed me what Abominations were set up in his Temple *in me*, and how the Buyers and Sellers had defiled it, and that he was come to cast them out, and to prepare it an Habitation for himself; which must be done by the *Spirit of Judgment*, and the *Spirit of Burning*. And for Ever Blessed be his Powerful Name, that I have known his *Word* to be unto my Soul as an *Hammer* and a *Fire*, breaking and melting my Rocky Heart in pieces; to be *Quick and Powerful* indeed, and *sharper than any Two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joynts and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart*, Heb. 4. 12.

This was a terrible *Ministration* to Flesh and Blood; for now *Judgment was set upon the Head of the Man of Sin*, and upon the *Beast, and the Whore, and the false Prophet*; For the Hour of God's Judgment was come, and the Fear and Dread of his *Everlasting Power* was upon me, and my Soul was humbled before him, Waiting Patiently for his Salvation. O the *Silence* this Dispensation brought my Soul into! I became as one Dumb from my own Words, and Opened not my Mouth therein, because it was the Lord's Doing, and the Ushering in of that *Glorious Day* which hath dawned upon me. For behold, a Ministration that exceedeth in Glory is come; *Old things must be done away, that all things may become New*: And I am now, through the Infinite Mercy of my God, a Living Witness in my Measure, of his Blessed *Truth*, and Feel a Travel upon my Soul, for the Growth and Increase of the Government thereof, till we all (who truly Believe in Christ) as One Body, come to a *Perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ*. For I do Believe, he will *Finish Transgression, and make an End of Sins, and Bring in Everlasting Righteousness; the Work whereof is Peace, and the Effect whereof is Quietness and Assurance for ever*.

And now, this is my Cry to the God of my Life, That I may be kept always Low and Tender before him, always Watching and Waiting for his Blessed Appearance, to Change me more and more into his own Glorious Image and Likeness, that I may be to his Praise and Glory, whose Grace has been *So* Exceeding Abundant towards me. For I can Now Experimentally say, *Where Sin did Abound*, as it did in me, who Drank up Iniquity, in Years that are past, as the Ox doth Water, *there Grace hath much more Abounded*; and *Life and Immortality is brought to Light*, whereby *Death shall be swallowed up in Victory*. For through the Aboundings of Grace, I am in some Degree, *Crucified with Christ*; *Nevertheless, I thank God I Live; yet not I, but Christ Liveth in me*; *and the Life which I now live in the Flesh, is by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*; *and not for me*, or some Particular Select Number of Men and Women *only*, *but for the* **Whole Lump** *of Mankind: For he tasted Death for Every Man, and gave himself a Ransome for All*, that All might have the Benefit arising from it, if they give up in Sincere Obedience to him. And that none may plead *Want of Power* so to do, the Lord hath caused his *Grace, which bringeth Salvation, to Appear to All Men*; and a *Manifestation of his Spirit is given to Every Man to profit withal*. So that None have cause to complain, they have an *Hard Master*, that requireth Brick without Straw, and expects a Crop where he has not Sown; for the Lord hath largely Extended his Mercy towards *All Men*, and Sown the Seed of the Kingdom in *Every Heart*; And tho' Man cannot make the Seed to grow, for that is God's Work alone; yet Man hath a Power *in himself*, tho' not *of himself*, to **Be still**, and to **Wait**, till God Arise, and Shake, and Open the Earth, and Break the Hard Clods thereof, and so make Way for the *Seed* to come forth. For 'tis God that Worketh in us by his own Power, to Will and to Do the things that are *Well-pleasing in his Sight*. Or is not by *Works of Righteousness* which we have done, or can do, in our own Will and Strength; but according to his *Mercy* he Saved, and doth Save us, by the *Washing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed*, and sheds, *on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour*; That being Justified, or made Just, by his Grace, *which teacheth us to deny Ungodli-*

ness and Worldly Lusts, and to live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present World; Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the Glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the Lord from Heaven, the Quickning Spirit, we should be made Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life.

This *Mystery* was Hid *in me* in former Days, when I was High in *Notion*, and *Carnal Reasoning*, as is not unknown to thee, and many others, both here and in the Country; but now is measureably made Manifest to me, by the *True Light, which Enlightneth every Man that cometh into the World*; and even then Shined in my *Dark Heart*, tho' I comprehended it not, as I hinted before in this *Epistle*. For the Lord, in the Riches of his Love to my Soul, hath *sent forth his Light and his Truth*, whereby I have been led unto his *Holy Hill* and brought unto the Rock, which He himself hath Opened, and caused the Waters to gush out, and run in my Dry Places.

And now my Heart's Desire is, to be kept Waiting in *Self-denial*, and true *Poverty of Spirit*, before the Lord, that he may Feed me with the *Bread* and *Water* of Life; and as I am thus Kept and Fed, I shall then be as a *Watered Garden*, and Witness a Growth and Progress in the *Blessed Truth*. But if a Negligent and Careless *Frame of Mind* should come upon me, which I trust, my God will preserve me from, my Soul would soon *Wither*, and be as an Oak whose *Leaf fadeth*. Therefore mine Eye and Supplication is to Him continually, That I may hold on in his *Righteous Way*, which is *Straight to the Upright-hearted*, and where *Peace floweth in as a River*, and *Joy in the Holy Ghost Aboundeth*. This is the Way which the Lord hath *Cast up* for his *Redeemed to Walk in*; the *Way of Holiness*: Here the *Enemy* cannot Hurt, the *Roaring Lion* cannot Devour; for no *Lion* nor *Ravenous Beast* is found therein; but the *Ransomed Travellers* are Guarded with *Salvation* on every Side, and the *Glory of the Lord* is their Rereward.

I have set down these Things, as the *Lord Opened* them upon my Spirit, and as I felt the *Motion of Life* Moving in my Heart, to Communicate them unto thee; that thou, who hast known,

known me in my former Days, may'st Rejoyce with me in the Lord, who Alone, Alone, and None Else, hath Turn'd my **Captivity**, and Put a **New Song** in my Mouth, even **Praise unto our God**, who Liveth and Reigneth for Ever and Ever.

Salute my Beloved Friends, *Thomas Shewards* and *Mary Gulson*, when thou seest them; for they Refreshed me with their *Several Visits*, when they were in *London*.

Salute Friends in General, tho' I am unknown to Many by Face: *For the Love of God is Shed abroad in* my *Heart*, and Springs towards All Mankind; but Especially to those that *Walk in the Light, as* God *is in the Light:* For therein the *Christian Fellowship* Stands, and not in any Outward Models, or Forms of Communion whatsoever.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with thee. Amen. Amen.

George's Court, near Hick's Hall, London, the 28th of the 8th Month, 1698.

Richard Claridge.

The

The Third EPISTLE.

TO MY

Kindred and Relations,

According to the Flesh.

My Dear Kindred and Relations!

THE Great God, who is *Abundant in Mercy, Wonderful in Counsel*, and *Excellent in Working*, having been pleased to *Call me by his Grace*, and to *Reveal his Son in me*, who was for Many Years past, a *Blind Leader of the Blind*, Void of the *True Knowledge of God*, and *Jesus Christ*, *whom he hath sent, a Light into the World, that whosoever Believeth on him, should not abide in Darkness, but have the Light of Life*, John 12. 46. Compared with 8. 12. And to shine in my Dark Heart, *to give me the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ*; who tho' he Ever Lives in himself, yet was he Crucified, and as a Lamb slain *in me* by Transgression and Disobedience: But Glory, Glory be to his Everlasting Name, he Now Liveth, and behold he is Alive for Evermore! *Amen! And hath the Keys of Hell and Death*: I cannot be satisfied to Enjoy his *Living Presence* alone, which I feel at this Time to the great Refreshing and Gladding of my Heart, beyond the Increase of Corn and Wine, and Oyl, and all Earthly Pleasures, Profits, or Enjoyments whatsoever: But the *Love of God* being *Shed abroad in my Heart*, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto me, constraineth me to Love All Mankind, and to Desire the Eternal Welfare of their Immortal Souls.

And

And, O that All the *Sons* and *Daughters* of Men, who are Wandring upon the *Barren Mountains and Desolate Hills, as Sheep without a Shepherd*, and Feeding upon that Meat which Perisheth, and so cannot Nourish the Soul to *Everlasting Life*, had their *Ears* Opened to Hear, and their *Hearts* Inclined to Follow the Voice of the Living Shepherd, *Christ Jesus*, who is come in his *Glorious Inward Appearance*, to Gather the Poor *Dispersed of Judah*, and those that are as the *Outcasts of Israel*, that they may know the *One Fold*, and the *One Shepherd*, and find the *True Pasture*, where he makes his *Lambs* and *Little Ones* to Rest, and Feed upon the Meat that affords Living Nourishment, and Endures for Ever and Ever. For the *Love of God* is Extended unto *All*, and Christ is the *Propitiation* for the Sins of *All*; and the *Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto All*; *the Oxen and Fatlings are killed*; *yea, All things are ready*; and *All* are Invited to the *Marriage Supper* of the *Lamb*. *Ho, every one that Thirsteth, come ye to the Waters, and he that hath no Money: Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy Wine and Milk without Money and without Price.* Isai. 55. 1. *If any Man Thirst, let him come unto me* saith Christ, *and Drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his Belly shall flow Rivers of Living Water*, John 7. 37, 38. *I am the Root and the Off-spring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star.* (For so is he known to be to a Remnant, after a long, dark and dismal Night of Rebellion and Apostasie.) *And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is a thirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely*, Rev. 22. 16, 17. O the Riches of the Grace of God! O the Freeness and Largeness of his Invitation! *All* are Called, and *None* are Excepted, but those who Except themselves, by Wilful Disobedience. For this is the Testimony of *Jesus*, and I am sure his Testimony is true; *Him that comes to me*, saith he, *I will in no wise Cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own Will, but the Will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's Will, which hath sent me, That of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last Day. And this is the Will of him that sent me, That every one which Seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have Everlasting Life; and I will raise him up at the last Day*, John 6. 37, 38, 39, 40.

Mark

Mark this, *It is the Father's Will, I should lose nothing.* So *Paul* Testifieth, *That God will have All Men to be saved, and come to the Knowledge of the Truth,* 1 Tim. 2. 4. So *Peter* Declareth, *The Lord is Long-Suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that All should come to Repentance,* 2 Pet. 3. 9. And the Lord himself, saith, *I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth,* Ezek. 18. 32.

Wherefore it is the Desire and Travel of my Soul, That *All* in General, and Ye *my Friends and Kinsfolk,* according to the Flesh, in Particular, may Embrace the Tender Invitation of God, *Seek the Lord, while he may be Found; Call ye upon him, while he is Near. Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the Unrighteous Man his Thoughts; and let him Return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly Pardon,* Isai. 55. 6, 7. Behold! I Testifie, That this is the Day of God's Great Love to the *Children of Men:* Behold! He is come **Near** to Every One; yea, *Nearer* than many *Professors* at this Day, in our Nation and others, do Conceive: *For the Word,* said *Moses, is very* **Nigh** *unto thee, In thy Mouth, and In thy Heart, that thou may'st Do it,* Deut. 30. 14. *Even the Word of Faith, which the* Apostle *Preached,* Rom. 10. 8. *The Word of Grace,* which he *Commended the Brethren to,* Acts. 20. 32. *The Ingrafted Word, which was in the Beginning with God, and was God: In whom was Life, and the Life was the Light of Men,* John 1. 1, 4. The **Virtue** of it is very Excellent and Precious, as they who have due Regard unto it, do Experience. For as the Apostle said, *It is Quick and Powerful, and Sharper than any Two-edged Sword, Piercing to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joynts and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart,* Heb. 4. 12. To this *Word* alone, which *Searcheth the Heart,* and *Tryeth the Reins,* and by its Penetrating Powerful Operation, *Divides between that and our Souls,* which separated our Souls from God. The Lord compares it to a *Fire and an Hammer,* Jer. 23. 29. *To burn up the Dross, and to break the Rock in Pieces.* And this is the *Word of God,* even Jesus Christ himself, *Rev.* 12. 13. Which giveth *Light* and *Life* to our Immortal Souls, as we turn our Minds, and give up in Sincere Obedience to it. Man's Departure from, and Disobedience to, *this Word of God in the Heart,* is the Cause of all his Misery;

 And

and he never can be Reſtored to Happineſs, till he Return to it again.

This is a *Myſtery* to the Generality of *Profeſſing Chriſtians*, and they Stumble at it, and ſpeak Contemptibly of it; but, *Poor Creatures!* They know not what they Say, nor whereof they Affirm. And in their Ignorance of, and Alienation from, this *Living, Eternal* and *Internal Word*, they are run out into Words of their own Preparing, and have Heaped to themſelves Teachers of Words; for the *Life and Power* they are departed from. Whereby it comes to paſs, That Many in our Day are called *Miniſters of Chriſt*, and the People ignorantly Eſteem them as ſuch, *when Chriſt never ſent them*, nor did they ever receive the *Word at his Mouth*; but by Vertue of a meer *Humane Call*, in their own Will and Wiſdom, they take upon them to Preach, and Cry, *The Word of the Lord*, when they have no *Divine Miſſion* or *Authority* for their Practice. For the true *Miniſters of Chriſt* are *Immediately* ſent by him; And they Wait, in *Silence*, of all Fleſh, Study and Reaſoning, to receive *Immediately* from him, before they deliver to the People. It is therefore an *High Preſumption*, in all the *Men-made Teachers*, to Aſſemble the People together, and to take upon them to *Preach in the Name of the Lord*, who is ſore Diſpleaſed with all ſuch; and in Teſtimony againſt them, hath given them a *Miſcarrying Womb*, and a *Dry Breaſt*, ſo that *they do not Profit the People at all*, but Cauſe them to *Err by their Lyes*, Jer. 23. 33. They uſe indeed many *Scripture-Words* and *Expreſſions*, and are very ready at *Chapter* and *Verſe*; But not Waiting to receive firſt from the Lord *Immediately*, the *Meſſage, Counſel, Doctrine*, or *Exhortation*, which they deliver to the People, they are but *Thieves* and *Robbers*, *Falſe Prophets* and *Deceivers*, and the *Anger of the Lord is kindled againſt them*. For thus ſaith the Lord, *Behold, I am againſt the Prophets that ſteal my Words, every one from his Neighbour: Behold, I am againſt the Prophets, ſaith the Lord, that uſe their Tongues, and ſay, He ſaith*, Jer. 23. 30, 31.

Therefore the *Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven* againſt them: For thus ſaith the Lord, *Wo unto the fooliſh Prophets, that follow their own Spirit, and have ſeen nothing*, Ezek. 13. 3. *Thus they Pervert the Words of the Living God*, Jer. 23. 36. *And Prophe-*

these Lyes in his Name; a False Vision and Divination, a thing of Nought, and the Deceit of their Heart, Jer. 14. 14. For the Lord neither Spake to them, nor Sent them. So that they are *Brutish Pastors*, who Destroy and Scatter the Flock; and they can do no otherwise, who *Run before they are Sent*. But alas! These are the *Priests* and *Teachers* of many of the People, who follow them for their Dreams and Delusions, and the Pleasing Things they Preach to them; and tho' their *Immortal Souls* lie at Stake, yet, *Poor Blinded Creatures!* They follow these *Blind Guides* into the Ditch. They are Teachers *that Teach for Hire, and Divine for Money*, Micah 3. 11. *All looking to their own Way, every one for his Gain from his Quarter*, Isai. 56 11. *They will bite with their Teeth, and cry, Peace; And he that putteth not into their Mouths, they even prepare War against him*, Mic. 3. 5. Therefore the *Sun is gone down over these Prophets, and the Day is dark over them; and these Seers shall be ashamed, and these Diviners confounded; Yea, they shall all cover their Lips; for there is no Answer of God*, Mic. 3. 6, 7.

This I write not by *Report, Tradition*, or *Hear-Say*, but of my *Own Knowledge*, and by *Sad Experience*; for I have been Among them, and Tryed them, yea, I was One of them, my self; being for Many Years a *Priest* of the *Church of England*, so called; and after that, for Some Time a *Teacher* among the *Baptists*, who were accounted the most Refined Sort of *Congregational Professors*, and have indeed Relinquished many of the *National Ceremonies* and *Superstitious Practices*, but do yet Retain much of the same *Doctrine* and *Worship*, which Sprung up in the Dark and Horrid *Night of Apostacy*; so that Some Branches of the *Bitter Tree* are lop'd off only, but the Main Body of it is still standing. Therefore the Lord, in his Infinite Mercy to my Soul, Called me out from amongst them, and Turn'd me to his **Light** *Shining in my Heart*; which is the *Word that was in the beginning with God*, even Jesus Christ, the same Yesterday, to Day, and for Ever: Who is Come *to Teach his People himself*; And I have known, and do know, his *Teaching* to be an **Inward Ministry**, *In the Heart and Conscience*; and that he doth Teach to *Profit*, which none of the *Hirelings* of the World can do; For he Teacheth with *Authority*, and not as the *Scribes*; He Teacheth,

That the *Inside of the Cup and Platter must be made clean*, but the *Scribes* waſh the *Outside*: He Teacheth, That a Man muſt be *Born again, or he cannot Enter into the Kingdom of God.* But what do the *Scribes* ſay to this? They talk indeed of *Regeneration*, and Recommend it to the People as indiſpenſably Neceſſary: But what kind of *Regeneration* is it? Not a Total and Perfect *Regeneration from All Sin*, not a State of *Liberty and Redemption from the Nature and Being of Sin*: No, this is not their Doctrine; but the *Regeneration* which they Preach and Maintain, is a Partial and Imperfect Work, a thing to be done to the Halves: For this is their Doctrine, *It is Impoſſible*, ſay they, *to be perfectly freed from Sin on this ſide the Grave*: And by this their Fleſh-pleaſing Doctrine, they gain and keep their *Proſelytes*; rendring the contrary Doctrine *Impoſſible*, and utterly Inconſiſtent with the End of *Chriſt's Coming*. But they miſerably *Err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God*: For it was the End of *Chriſt's Coming in the Fleſh*, near Seventeen Hundred Years ago, and he is *now come* at this Day in the *Spirit*, to Deſtroy the *Works of the Devil*, to Finiſh *Tranſgreſſion*, to make an End of *Sins*, and to make Reconciliation for *Iniquity*, and bring in *Everlaſting Righteouſneſs*. He came, not only to *Give himſelf a Sacrifice of Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*, but alſo to *Redeem us from* **All Iniquity**, *and Purifie unto himſelf a Peculiar People, Zealous of Good Works*, Tit. 2. 14. *That being made free from Sin, and becoming Servants to God, we may have our Fruit unto Holineſs, and the end Everlaſting Life*, Rom. 6. 22.

The *Soul* is of Extraordinary Value, of more Worth than all the World; and therfore it Concerns Every One to *See to it*, that he be not deceived in an Affair of ſo great Importance. And for the Avoiding of *Error* therein, let every one look **Inward**, to the *Spiritual Appearance of Chriſt* in the Heart; and as they give up in Faithful Reſignation and Obedience to that *Appearance*, Chriſt will lead them out of *Sin* and *Error*, both in *Converſation, Doctrine* and *Worſhip*, and Eſtabliſh them in *Righteouſneſs* and in *Truth*; and Teach them that Pure and Holy *Worſhip*, which firſt cometh from God, and then returns to him again with Acceptance.

This

This *Doctrine* may and doth seem Strange to many, that are accounted the *Wise and Prudent*, by the World; for it is *Hid from them*: But I do Testifie and Declare, That 'tis the *Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, and is *Revealed only unto Babes*: Whosoever will Learn it, he must become as a *little Child*; and he must *Deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow Christ*; who is the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life*: Unto whom, in the *Tender Mercies of God*, wherein my Heart is Enlarged towards *You*, and *All Mankind*, I Heartily Commend *You*; Beseeching Him, who Ministreth both *Seed to the Sower*, and Blesseth the *Seed sown*, to Bless my *Work* and *Labour of Love* to You, and as Many shall have the Perusal of it.

Your Travelling Friend and Kinsman,

For the New Birth in You,

Richard Claridge.

This was Written in the Year 1699. and now Printed, in order to be sent to my Kindred and Relations in the Flesh.

The

The Fourth EPISTLE.

BEING

Something by Way of Diſcovery of the *Subtil Workings of Satan*, in my own Experience; and a Word of Faithful Counſel, and Tender Caution thereupon, in an *Epiſtle* to thoſe Tempted and Exerciſed Ones, that are Convinced of the *Bleſſed Truth*.

My Dear Friends!

AFter the Soul, by the *Inſhining Light of Chriſt*, comes to be Convincingly Enlightned, and by the *Powerful Manifeſtation*, or *Revelation* thereof in the Heart and Conſcience, is Inabled to Believe in, to Joyn to, and to Give it ſelf up To be Led and Guided by it; the *Soul* is Brought in a Gradual Progreſs, to *Witneſs* and *Experience* Something of an Effectual Turning from *Darkneſs to Light*, and from the *Power of Satan unto God*; Something of the *New Birth*, or *New Creation*; whereof, as *Chriſt* is the ſole Author and Beginner, ſo it fixeth its Eye upon Him alone, to be the Carrier on, and Finiſher.

For having Seen, in the *Light which is Within*, its Miſerable Fall and Degeneracy from that *Primitive Purity* and *Righteouſneſs* wherein it was Created; the Odiouſneſs and Sinfulneſs of *Sin*, its Diſtance and Alienation from the *Holy Life of Jeſus*, the Juſtice of God againſt *All Unrighteouſneſs*, its own Inability to make *Satisfaction* for the *leaſt Offence*, and the utter Impoſſibility of ever *Enjoying God* in that Condition: From the Senſe whereof Ariſeth

seth great *Horrour of Mind, Perplexity of Spirit*, and *Fear of Everlasting Destruction*, without the Infinite Mercy and Love of God; which is also Manifested by the same *Blessed Light*: For as that is diligently Minded, and Attended to, it makes a Twofold Discovery to the Soul; First of *Sin*, and then of a *Saviour*; who is Merciful and Gracious, *Nigh*, even **In the heart**, and both Able and Willing, through his *Righteous Judgments*, to Heal the *Bruised*, Bind up the *Broken*, Deliver the *Captive*, Set at Liberty the *Prisoner*, Save, Cleanse and Justifie the *Contrite in Spirit*, and Give Rest to the *Labouring and Heavy Laden*: From whence there Arises *Sighs*, and *Groans*, and *Supplications*, which Ascend unto the Lord, whose Eye is over his *Travelling Seed*, and his Ear open unto its Cry. And now, being made Sensible of the *Love of God*, the Soul begins to Burn with *Fervent Desires* after the Enjoyment of his Presence, and to be Made Willing to Part with All its former Lovers for the Sake of Christ, whom it Prizes and Values above All in this World; Taking up its *Cross*, and *Denying Self*, and Resolving, through the Lord's Assistance, to Cleave Steadfastly to him, and to Follow him in the *Regeneration*.

After the *Soul* has thus Travelled, and had this Experience, in the Beginning Work of *True Conversion*; after it hath known Something of a *War in Righteousness*, against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil: The *Devil*, who could not Hold the Soul any longer in *Captivity*, now Regretting and Envying its *Escape out of the Snare*, imploys his usual Subtilty to Entangle it again, and to Bring it into that *Bondage* it formerly was in; And Various are the Ways and Means he useth to Accomplish and Effect it. Some *Instances* whereof, being through Mercy not unacquainted with his *Devices*, I shall here set down.

Sometimes the *Enemy* will Tempt the Soul, to Question the *Truth it self*, and the *Power* and *Ability* that is in it, to Make and Keep the Soul *Free*; or to Stumble at the *Cross of Christ*, as being an Heavy Yoke, and Uneasie to be born; or to be Offended at the *Narrowness of the Way of the Lord*, and so by degrees to Get Above the *Witness of God in the Conscience*, to Decline the Plain and Simple *Testimony of Truth*, and Take up with a *Form of Godliness*, without the *Life* and *Power*; whereby it comes to

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Wax Dry, and then to Fade and Wither, Returning into the Broad Way again, into the World, and Spirit of it again; like *the Dog to his Vomit*; *or the Sow that was Waſhed, to her Wallowing in the Mire.*

But if the *Enemy* be Prevented here, ſo that he cannot Prevail upon the *Soul*, to Shake or Unſettle it, as to its *Foundation*; or Bring it into *Bondage* again, to *the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, or the Pride of Life*: But the Soul is Strengthened and Preſerved by the Lord, to Reſiſt him Stedfaſtly in the *Faith*: Then this Cunning Adverſary applies himſelf to other Methods, wherein he Lurks, as a *Snake in the Graſs*, and is not ſo eaſily Diſcerned, becauſe they carry ſome Reſemblance of the *Light*: Unto which *Light*, notwithſtanding, if the *Soul* did Diligently Attend, and Wait Low upon, it would in due time fully Detect both them, and this Wily Enemy in them: But it often falls out through *Unwatchfulneſs* and *Non-Attention* to the *Light Within*, and making too much Haſte, before Things are ſufficiently Tryed, by the *Standard* which God has ſet up to Examine them by; that *Subtil Tranſformations* and *Falſe Appearances*, are taken for *True* and *Real Manifeſtations*; as the *Shadow*, for the *Body*; and the *Image* or *Likeneſs*, for the *Life* and *Subſtance*.

Thus the *Enemy* ſometimes Endeavours to Beguile the *Soul* into a Miſtaken Reſt and Satisfaction in the Firſt Knowledge it had of the *Truth*, when it Experienced ſomething of the *Beginning-Work of Regeneration*; whereby it comes to Abate in its *Zeal*, Cool in its *Love to Truth*, and to be much Slackned in its *Travel* and *Progreſs* towards *Perfection*. Whence Enſues a *Laodicean Neutrality* and *Indifferency*, the Soul is neither quite *Hot* nor *Cold*; but Reflecting upon former *Experience* and *Enjoyments*, and Feeding upon *Old Wine* and *Manna*, or perhaps a little *New Wine* now and then in its *Old Bottle*; which being *Old*, cannot Retain the *Wine*, but it ſoon Runneth out, and is Loſt; the Soul comes to Reſt and Center in a kind of *Round*, or *Circle*, of Bodily Exerciſe, in meer Formal and Cuſtomary Obſervations.

If the *Enemy* cannot Effect this, then he will ſtrive to Exalt The Mind above Meaſure, upon the Senſe of ſome Preſent *Great Enjoyment*, or to Delight it with ſome *Pleaſant Pictures*, and Images of *Heavenly Things*; or to Deck it with *Gifts*, inſtead of the

the *Covering of the Spirit*; Or to Run it into *High Speculations*, *Lofty Notions*, and *Selfish Fleshly Reasonings* about *Spiritual Objects*; Or to Form Strange *Visions* and *Ideas* in the *Mind* and *Fancy*, whereby some, in their Deceived Apprehensions, have been *Caught up* as it were *into the Third Heaven*, but the whole Rapture has been Nothing but a Deception or Imposture of the *Enemy*, who knows how to Transform himself into the Likeness of an *Angel of Light*. For certain it is, That as the *Soul's Safety* lies in Low and Constant *Waiting upon the Lord*, in the Babe-like Simpleness and Humility, to feel the **Immediate Spring of Life** to *Open*; So its *Danger* lies, in being *Drawn* or *Turn'd away* from thence. The **Spring of Life** is the *Basis* or *Center* of *Unity*, *Comfort*, *Stability*, and *Safety*: Whoever therefore is *Removed* or *Diverted* from this, 'tis no Marvel, if he Soar for a Time into *Imaginary*, *Heights*, and at last Sink into a *Divided*, *Unsteady* and *Shatter'd Condition*.

Again, 'Tis the Work of the *Spirit of Error*, to lead the Soul into a Neglect, or Low Esteem, of the *Holy Scriptures*, upon Pretence of their Needlesness or Uselesness, because we are under the *Teachings* of the *Spirit of Truth*: For the *Spirit of Truth* never Leads any to That. 'For tho' the *Spirit* be the Primary and Principal *Rule of Faith and Practice*, it being the *Saints Rule* before the *Holy Scriptures* were Given Forth, and Without Which they cannot be *Spiritually* or *Savingly* Understood or Applied: Yet forasmuch as they Contain the *Testimony* of *God*, of *Christ*, and of his *Servants* and *Handmaidens*, Upon whom he *Poured out* of his *Spirit*, and are *Profitable for Doctrine*, *for Reproof*, *for Correction*, *and for Instruction in Righteousness*; Yea, *Able to Make Wise unto Salvation*, *through Faith which is in Christ Jesus*: We ought to Bless the Lord for them, and Esteem them not only as a *Rule*, but as the best Secondary and Subordinate *Rule* Extant in the World: And I do hereby Testifie and Declare of them as Such, and that they are of Excellent Use, when they are *Opened in us* by the Same *Holy Spirit* that Gave them Forth, and we come to Witness the Truth and Benefit of them in our own Particulars.

I speak of Those who have the *Holy Scriptures*, and having the Use of their *Rational Faculties*, can Read them, or Hear them Read; and when Read, are Capable of Understanding them: But as for those who have them not, or are under any Natural Incapacity, the Case is otherwise with such; As the *Heathen*, *Little*

Little Infants, Idiots, Diſtracted Perſons, and *Such as are Born both Blind, Deaf and Dumb.* Where Much is Given, there Much is Required; and where Little is Beſtowed, there Little is Expected. For God is not a *hard Maſter,* to Reap where he has not Sown.

Now this is not to Deny the Sufficiency of the *Light or Spirit of Truth,* without the *Holy Scriptures*; for the *Light* or *Spirit* is Undoubtedly Sufficient of it ſelf, even without the *Holy Scriptures,* to Lead and Guide the *Faithful* into *All Truth*: But to Manifeſt that *All Men* are Obliged to *Faithfulneſs,* according to what they have Received; whether *Five Talents,* or *Two,* or *One,* a Proportionable Improvement is Required from them. And therefore We, who are under the *Teachings of the Spirit,* which the *Heathen* have as well as we; Yet having the *Holy Scriptures* alſo, which God hath not Afforded them, we Ought to *Magnifie the Giver* of this *Double Talent* to us, and Labour to be found *Faithful Improvers* of it, to his *Honour* and *Glory.*

I Grant, the *Holy Scriptures* are a *Cabinet Lock'd,* till He who has the *Key of David* Opens them to us: And therefore we are to *Wait* upon him for the *Unlocking of the Myſtery,* but by no Means to *Neglect* or *Diſ-eſteem* them. 'Tis the Error of many *Profeſſors* at this Day, to Raiſe their Value too High, and to lay too Great a Streſs upon them, even to the Neglecting of the *Holy Spirit*; but we ſhall Run into another Extream, if we either *Debaſe* or *Diſuſe* them.

But if the *Enemy* fail in his Attempt here, then he will Endeavour to Draw the Soul to *Pride* and *Judging*; and either to be Diſ-ſatisfied with its Own Meaſure of the *Gift of God,* or to Prefer it to what Others have Received; whereby it ſometimes Runs into *Contempt* of the **Preſent Diſpenſation, which is the Laſt and to continue to the End of Time,** under Pretence of Something Higher and Better, and ſo into a Partial, if not a Total *Apoſtaſie* from the *Truth.*

By theſe, and ſundry other *Serpentine Wiles,* whereof I have had Some *Exprience* in my Progreſs **Sion**-ward, and under which I have Known the *Lord's Power* nigh to Support, and from which, in his appointed Seaſon, to Deliver me, Praiſed be his *Holy Name* for Ever; doth the *Prince of Darkneſs* Attack and Beſet thoſe Souls who are Turned to the *True Light.* And I Bleſs the *God of my Salvation,* I can truly ſay, My Soul doth Sympathize with them under

under their *Exercises* and *Temptations* of Several Kinds, and is in a Great Travel for them, that they may come to See both How they are Beset, and Who it is that Besets them, and Flee for *Refuge* to the **Hope of Israel**, who is the *Sanctuary of the Afflicted*, and a *Strong Tower of Defence* against the Face of their *Enemy*.

The *Mystery Iniquity*, which is at Work in Our, as it was in Former Days, is to many, a *Hidden Mystery*; for *Antichrist* is still the Same that Ever he was, Obstructing, as much as in him lies, the *Beginning*, *Progress* and *Perfection* of the *Work of Christ*, by Innumerable Arts and Stratagems. And that he may Carry on his *Satanical Designs* the more Successfully, he oftentimes Appears by Way of Imitation and Resemblance, as an *Angel of Light*, and that with *Power*, *Signs*, and *Lying Wonders*; for his Coming is after the *Working of Satan*, and by his *Delusive Transformations*, he seems to give a Kind of *Life* to the *Image of the Beast*, whereby many through their own Unwatchfulness have been Deceived, and Brought to Worship the *Image* instead of the *Substance*. *Antichrist* hath his *Dreams*, *Visions*, *Voices*, *Raptures*, *Extasies*, *Hymns* and *Songs*, in Imitation of *Christ*; for being the *Prince of the Power of the Air*, if he can but Make the Mind Airy, he is then in his Proper *Element* or *Region*; and hath Power there, as well as Place and Opportunity, to Raise Strange and Various *Likenesses*, and to Work his *Lying Wonders* and *Delusions*.

Therefore this *Subtil Enemy* is to be Watched against with *All Diligence*, whether he Roar as a *Lion*, Range as a *Bear*, Tempt and Twist as a *Serpent*, or Appear in the Similitude of an *Angel of Light*: Remember the Words of our Lord Jesus to his Disciples, *What I say unto You, I say unto All*, **Watch**, Mark 13. 37. And that we may *Watch* as we ought to do, the *Truth* Requires, That we Keep very *Low* and *Tender* in our Spirits, very *Still* and *Silent* in our Minds before the Lord; for out of this Frame there is no Profitable or Advantagious *Watching*. The *Exalted Mind* is Careless, the *Hard Heart* Insensible, and in the *Noise or Hurries*, there can be no Right or Regular Attention. Therefore, that we may *Watch Profitably*, let us *Wait Lowly*; for 'tis the *Lowly* the Lord hath Respect unto, and the *Meek* whom he will Guide in Judgment, and Teach his Way.

A Watchful State, *My dear Friends*, is a Precious State; There is *True Teaching* and *Safe Conduct* in it: But, as I before Minded,

there is no *Watching* to any Profit, out of a *Low Tender, Still Frame of Spirit*: Therefore let us be in a Travel for this *Neceſſary Qualification*, this *Indiſpenſable Preparatory*, to ſo *Excellent*, ſo *Needful*, and ſo *Advantagious a Work*, as Right *Watching* is.

As we are Found in this *Frame*, and Doing this *Work* Faithfully, the *Light* will Diſcover unto us All the *Works of Darkneſs*, the Whole *Myſtery of Iniquity*; and we ſhall be Inabled thereby, for of our ſelves we cannot Do it, not only to Reſiſt and Repel, but alſo to Get the Victory over the *Enemy*.

If we Keep here, we ſhall avoid the Two Dangerous Extreams, of *Staying behind*, or *Running before* our *Guide*; of *Turnig aſide* to the *Right Hand*, or to the *Left*; between which lies our Preſervation. O the Bleſſedneſs of a *Low*, *Contrite*, *Silent*, *Waiting*, *Watchful State*! Here we Know *True* and *Profitable Teaching*; Here we Feel the Preſent *Motions of Life*; and as *Life* Stirs, ſo *Strength* Renews, and *Virtue* is Added to our *Faith*; and the Noble **Seed of God** Ariſeth into Dominion over All.

The *Spirit of Truth* Guides the Obedient into *All Truth*; And it not only Guides into, but it Preſerves them in it, from the *Error* and *Deluſion* of the *Wicked One*. The *Truth* is the *Rock of Ages*, the *Righteous* are Built upon it, and the *Gates of Hell* ſhall never Prevail either againſt it or them, as they Abide and Perſevere Faithfully therein.

Finally, *My Dear Friends*, let us See to it, that we Stand always in the *Counſel* and *Croſs of Chriſt*, and then our Standing will be Sure and Unmoveable: Otherwiſe, we ſhall Whiffle about as the *Inconſtant Wind*, and be as Unſtable as the *Floating Water*.

Now the God of Peace, that Brought again from the Dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Great *Shepherd of the Sheep*, through the Blood of the Everlaſting Covenant, Eſtabliſh You in his *Bleſſed Truth*, Make You Perfect in every *Good Works*, to Do his Will, Working in You that which is Well-pleaſing in his Sight, through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom be Glory for Ever and Ever. *Amen.*

George's Court, near *Hick's Hall*, *London*, the 28th of the 8th Month, 1698.

Richard Claridge.

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Anſwer to a *Queſtion*,

Propoſed by *John Tombs*, a Preacher among the *Baptiſts*, concerning *Juſtification*.

The Queſtion.

What is the Matter *of our Juſtification in the Sight of God?*

The Anſwer.

WAving the Several Opinions of *Papiſts*, *Calviniſts* and *Arminians*, which as they are at great Odds and Variance among themſelves about this Point, ſo they are all of them ſhort of the *Truth*, according to the Account given of *Juſtification*, in the *Holy-Scriptures*; I ſhall Premiſe a few things for the Clearing of the *Way*, and then ſpeak diſtinctly to the *Queſtion* it ſelf.

1. Man, in his *loſt Eſtate*, or *firſt Nature*, is wholly Unable, by any Natural Power of his own, to Deliver himſelf, or do any thing in order to Deliver himſelf out of that *Eſtate*; He not being Able of himſelf to do the leaſt thing that is *Spiritually Good*.

2. The Merciful God, of his own *Free-Grace* and *Love*, in Tender Pity and Compaſſion to Man, in order to Deliver him out of this *Deplorable State*, Sent the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, his Beloved Son, into the World, to *Taſte Death for every Man*, and be a *Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World, that whoſoever Believeth in him, ſhould not Periſh, but have Everlaſting Life*.

3. Chriſt

3. Christ, by his *One Offering* once offered, through the *Blood of his Cross* by the Eternal Spirit, without Spot to God, hath so far Answered the *Justice of God*, and *Reconciled us to Him*, even while we are *Enemies*, as that we are put into a Capacity of having our Sins that are past Remitted, upon our *Repentance*,

4. As we are put into this *Capacity*, by the *Favour of God*, and the *Sufferings and Death of Christ*; So there is a *Measure* of that *Life*, *Light*, *Spirit*, *Grace* and *Power* that was in Him, Communicated unto Us, as the *Free Gift of God*, to Inable us to *Believe* and *Repent*, in Order to our Recovery out of our *Lost Estate*.

5. As we come to Witness this *Life*, *Light*, *Spirit*, *Grace* and *Power of God*, in our Several Measures respectively, *Quickning*, *Enlightning*, *Sanctifying*, *Cleansing*, and *Redeeming* us from the *Power* of *Sin* and *Satan*, and Bringing us into *Union* and *Communion with God*, from whom we were at a Distance, and to whom we were Enemies, by *Wicked Works*; so we also come to know our *Justification*, that we who were before *Ungodly* and *Unrighteous*, are now made *Holy* and *Righteous*.

These things being thus Premised, I give this Short, Plain and True *Answer* to the *Question*, and say, That *Christ's Righteousness* alone is the *Matter of our Justification in the Sight of God*, according to that in the Prophet, *In his Day*, Judah *shall be saved*, *and* Israel *shall dwell safely*; *and this is the Name whereby he shall be called*, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, *Jer.* 23, 6. Which is Confirmed by the Apostle, 1 *Cor* 1. 30. *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.* Where *observe*, The Apostle doth not say, *Christ is Imputed*, or *Reckoned*; as the Word is generally taken by some, to signifie an *External Imputation* of a *Righteousness* made up of *Christ's Active* and *Passive Obedience*, to Persons Unsanctified in their *Inward Man*, and by which *David* and *Peter* stood Justified (as they say) before God; The One in his *Adultery* and *Murder*, and the Other even while he *Denied Christ* with *Cursing* and *Swearing*. But he saith, *Christ is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness*, &c. Where the Greek ἐγενήθη,

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and the Latin *Factus eſt*, (as *Beza* renders it) are full to my Purpoſe, For both theſe Words import a *Real Making*, and that of a Change in the *Thing* or *Perſon*, ſaid to be *Made ſo* or *ſo*, and not an *Imputative* only, in the Common *Proteſtants* Acceptation of the Word, which is but *Notional* and *Imaginary*.

But if it be Objected, *Chriſt's Righteouſneſs is Imputed to us, who are Unrighteous, Even as our Sins are Imputed to him, who had no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.*

I Anſwer, This hath no Strength at all in it, whatever the *Objecters* may ſuppoſe it hath: For.

1. Our Sins were never ſo Imputed to Chriſt, as that God did therefore Repute him a *Sinner*: Nay, there is no ſuch Phraſe or Expreſſion in the *Holy Scriptures*, as the *Imputing of our Sins to Chriſt*: The Apoſtle ſays, *He hath Made him to be Sin for us who knew no Sin*, 2 Cor. 5. 21. That is, a *Sacrifice for Sin*, as the Greek ἁμαρτία, and the Hebrew חטאת often Signifie in the *Old Teſtament*, to which the Apoſtle refers; but he doth not ſay, *Chriſt was made a Sinner for us*.

2. As God never Reputed Chriſt a *Sinner*, tho' *He bore our Griefs, carried our Sorrows, was wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, and the Lord laid upon him the Iniquities of us all*, Iſa. 53. 4, 5, 6. And was by Men *Condemned as a Sinner, and Numbred among the Tranſgreſſors*: So Chriſt never *Died*, never gave himſelf a *Sacrifice* for us, to the End we ſhould be Accounted or Reputed *Righteous*, and yet be no more ſo, in *Truth* and *Reality*, than Chriſt himſelf was a *Sinner*, who was *without Sin*, Heb. 4. 15. *Holy, Harmleſs, Undefiled, Separate from Sinners*, Chap. 7. 26. But the End of his *Death* is thus ſet forth, *And that he Died for All, that they which Live, ſhould not henceforth Live unto themſelves, but unto him which Died for them, and Roſe again*, 2 Cor. 5. 15. *For God hath not Appointed us to Wrath, but to Obtain Salvation by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who Died for us, that whether we Wake or Sleep, we ſhould Live together with him*, 1 Theſſ. 5. 9, 10.

But if there be thought to be any Weight or Force in the *Objection*, then I deſire thoſe who Urge it, to Aſſign ſome Reaſon, why any more *Righteouſneſs* or *Holineſs* is Required in us, than there was *Sin* or *Iniquity* in Chriſt; If we are *Righteous* by the meer *Imputation* of *Chriſt's Righteouſneſs*, as they alſo

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ſay, He was a *Sinner* by the Meer *Imputation* of our *Sins* to him.

The *Matter* then of our *Juſtification in the Sight of God*, is the *Righteouſneſs of Chriſt* alone; not that which is by Bare *Imputation* only, but that which is by Real *Tranſformation* alſo, when *Jeſus Chriſt is Formed in us*, Gal. 4. 19. When we are *Renewed in the Spirit of our Minds*, Epheſ. 4. 23. *Are Saved by the Waſhing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*, Tit. 3. 5. *Are Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 2 Pet. 1. 4. And ſo become *One with Chriſt*, as the *Branches* are *One with the Vine*. And by or in this Spiritual Birth, or Formation of *Chriſt in us, the Hope of Glory*, Col. 1. 27. We ſtand *Formally Juſtified*, and have a *Right* and *Title* to whatſoever he hath Done and Suffered for us. For when we Feel the *Life of Jeſus made Manifeſt in our Bodies*, 2 Cor. 4. 10. and the *Travelling Seed of God* really brough forth in Birth; when we know a Being *Waſhed, Sanctified, Juſtified, in the Name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and by the Spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. 6. 11. Then the *Obedience, Perſonal Righteouſneſs, Sufferings* and *Death of Chriſt*, comes to be Ours; and we Enjoy him not Divided from himſelf, and **Two Chriſts**, as ſome Erroneouſly Speak, but **One Entire Chriſt, Whole and Undivided**, *the Righteouſneſs of God by Faith*.

So that *Juſtification* and *Sanctification*, are in the *Preſent Caſe*, Inſeparably-conjoyned, and taken the One for the Other. For *Juſtification*, according to the *Etymology* of the Word, which is a Compound of *Juſtum & facio*, Denotes a *Making Juſt*. I do not ſay, that this is the Only Senſe of the Word, it having Many other Significations in the *Scripture*; but thoſe are *Improper* and *Metaphorical*. To *Juſtifie*, is to *Make Juſt*; As to *Sanctifie*, is to *Make Holy*. A Man cannot be Made *Holy*, by an *Imputed Holineſs*. It is the Real Work of the Spirit of God, to Make *Holy* of *Unholy*. Nor can a Man be Made *Juſt*, by an *Imputed Juſtice*; He may be Reputed, or Reckoned *Juſt*, upon the Account of ſuch an *Imputation*; but what will that Avail him in the Sight of God, if he is not Made *Juſt* by a *Real Righteouſneſs*? For the *Unrighteous ſhall not Inherit the Kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. 6. 9. In order therefore to the Enjoyment of that *Inheritance*, it is of Abſolute Neceſſity, that a Man be Made

Made *Righteous*, or Constituted *Righteous*; which none can truly be said to be, but by an *Inward Justice* Effectually Formed in the *Soul*, by the *Operation of the Holy Ghost*. In this *Righteousness*, the *Soul* hath Acceptance with the Lord, and in none Other; this being the *Righteousness of Christ*, the *Lamb of God*, who taketh away the *Sin of the World*: For if *Sin* still Remain, where's the *Righteousness of Christ*, who was *Manifested to take away Sin?* 1 John 3. 5. The Case is Positively Determined by the Apostle *John*; *Every one that doth Righteousness, is Born of Him*, i. e. *of God*, 1 John 2. 29. Or is *Righteous, even as he is Righteous*, 1 John 3. 7. *Whosoever doth not Righteousness, is not of God*, v. 10. *Imputation* or *Reputation* will be of no Advantage to that Person, who is not *Righteous* by *Regeneration* and *Renovation*.

Richard Claridge.

A Solemn Invitation,

In the Tender Love of God,

Unto all Sorts of *Religious Profeſſors*, under their Several *External Modes* and *Forms* of *Worſhip*, Deviſed and Uſed in the *Will* and *Wiſdom* of Man, to Turn their Minds **Inward**, to the *Light of Chriſt Jeſus in their own Hearts*, and to Wait Patiently upon the Lord therein, that they may come to Know *Redemption* from *Sin* and *Death*, and *Unacceptable Worſhip*; and be as *Lively Stones* Built up a *Spiritual Houſe*, an *Holy Prieſthood*, to Offer up *Spiritual Sacrifices*, Acceptable to God, by Jeſus Chriſt, the only *Mediator* between God and Man.

THE Glory of the *Goſpel-Diſpenſation* hath been and is greatly Darkned, by the Sad *Apoſtaſie of Man*, from the *Light* and *Spirit* of Jeſus Chriſt; and the *Myſtery of Inquity* doth ſo Generally Prevail over the Face of *Chriſtendom*, that notwithſtanding the many Pretences on Foot at this Day, to *Pure* and *Primitive Chriſtianity*, whether by the *Papiſts* on the One Hand, or thoſe that Profeſs themſelves *Reformed*, under National or Congregational Forms, on the Other; the *Man of Sin* ſtill keeps upon his *Throne*, and continues his Uſurp'd Dominion in the Hearts of Multitudes of People.

Many of the *Firſt Reformers*, both in this and other Nations, Began and Ran Well for their Time; they Manifeſted Great *Zeal for God*, againſt *Popiſh Corruptions* and *Innovations*, in Doctrine, Worſhip, Diſ-

Discipline and Tithes, according to the Measure of *Light* then Discovered to them, and Loved not their Lives unto the Death; but some in *Exile*, or in *Goals* and *Dungeons*, and others at the *Stake* or *Gibbet*, Finished their *Testimony*, as Faithful Martyrs of the **Lamb**, leaving a Sweet and Precious *Memorial* of their *Victorious Faith*, and *Patient Sufferings* behind them; that others might Follow their Steps, as they had done their Lord and Master, *Christ Jesus*; who Endured the *Cross*, and Despised the *Shame*, and is now Set down on the *Right Hand of God*.

But others there were in that Day, who being Unfaithful to the *Manifestation of the Spirit of God* in themselves, which first Opened their Minds, to give them a Sight of their own Estates, and the Abominations that were Set up and Practised, instead of the *Pure Truth* and *Worship of God*; the *Vision* soon closed again, and the *Morning* turned to *Night*, and *Gross Darkness* quickly overspread their *Habitations*; So that they knew not how to Go on with the Work, which the *Lord of Glory* had Begun in that Dawning of the *Reformation*. But their *Understandings* being Blinded, and their *Language* Confounded, while they Laboured to Pull down one *Babel*, they Contended also at the same time to Erect another. Yea, so Active and Industrious were those *Babel-Builders* in that Dark Night of Confusion, and so Ignorantly Zealous for their several *Plat-forms*, which through Pride, or Wordly Policy, or for Secular Advantage, One Party would Prefer and Set up in Opposition to Another; that tho' there was something Going forward under the Specious Title and Semblance of a *Reformation*; Yet it amounted to no more, than a plain *Deformation*; the *Abomination of Desolation* still *standing in the Holy Place*. For tho' they Divided, and Subdivided, both among themselves, and from one another, and Cut off here and there an *Excrescence*, or *Superfluous Branch*, yet the *Ax was not laid to the Root*, nor were the *Master-Boughs* Lop'd off; but the Accursed *Tree of Apostacy* still Grew and Flourished in its Ancient *Strength* and *Vigour*, notwithstanding all they had Done, or pretended to Do, to the Contrary.

And when they had, after much Time spent in Contriving their Particular *Models*, Formed themselves into Distinct *Societies*

and *Communions*, and put out *Articles*, *Confessions*, *Creeds* and *Catechisms*, composed in their Fleshly Wisdom; as one Party got the *Secular Power* on their Sides, Severe and Sanguinary *Laws* were Enacted, to Force and Persecute those that Dissented from them.

Thus as *Changes* and *Revolutions* happened in the *Civil Government*, so their *Schemes* of *Religion* varied; and the *Sword* of the *Magistrate*, that was drawn to Protect and Enforce one, was frequently used to the Suppression and Destruction of the other. For every *Party* thought their own *Way* and *Model* Best, and most Agreeable to the *Holy Scriptures*; and yet neither of them, when brought to Tryal, could make out their *Claim* by those **Sacred Records**; For they all *Erred, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God.*

This was the miserable *State and Condition* of those in the *Former Age*; and to descend to this *Present Generation*, Was not the Case the same, as *Episcopacy* or *Presbytery* got uppermost? Did they not endeavour to Compel Men, by *Persecuting Laws*, into their Several *Communions*? And since the *Penal Laws* concerning *Religion* have been *Laid aside*, tho' one Party cannot Now Force another; yet the same *Spirit* that acted in their *Predecessors*, 'tis to be feared, remains in too *many* of them; and that 'tis not *Will* to *Compulsion* and *Violence*, but *Power* to Effect it, which is wanting.

O how Blindly Zealous are they, for their Respective *Models* and *Systems*! What a Contention is among them for this and the other *Man-made Doctrine*, *Worship* and *Ordinance*, which they severally Believe and Practice! Catching at *Shadows*, and letting go the *Substance*; Crying up the *Outward Shape and Form*, but Neglecting the *Inward Life and Power* of Christianity. One cries, *Lo here*; and another cries, *Lo there is Christ*: *Our Church is Sound and Orthodox*, says one; *And Ours is Rightly Constituted, according to the Gospel*, says another: *Therefore Come and Joyn with us*, cry they, *or enter into Society with us; for we come nearest to the Primitive* and *Apostolick Pattern.*

But, alas! They *All* fall short of that; for *they are All gone out of the Way*, and turn'd aside into *Crooked Paths* of their own Invention. Therefore, when they shall say, *See here*, or

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See there, Go not after them. *For the Kingdom of God cometh not with Observation*; nor doth it ſtand in *Outward Gatherings*, *Outward Waſhings* or *Dippings*, *Outward Eatings* and *Drinking*, or any *Outward Conſtitutions* or *Practices* whatſoever: But the **Kingdom of God is within**, and is *Righteouſneſs*, *and Peace*, *and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*. So that the True *Gathering* is unto *Chriſt*, in his *Inward Appearance*; the True *Waſhing*, or *Dipping*, is the *Baptiſm* of the *Spirit*; and the True *Eating* and *Drinking* at the Table of the Lord, is *Inward* and *Spiritual*. But while Men Feed, as it were, upon the *Letter*, and their Life ſtands in *Outward Obſervances*, they are utter Strangers to the *True Gathering*, *Baptiſm* and *Supper* of the *Lord*; and the *Glorious Myſtery* of the *Goſpel* remains a Dark *Riddle* to them.

O the Darkneſs and Ignorance both of *Prieſts* and *People*, Generally Speaking, among the ſeveral Sorts Profeſſing *Chriſtianity* at this Day, by Rites and Uſages of meer *Humane Inſtitution*! They are Departed from the *Truth*, which is One, and was before any *Men-made Churches* and *Congregations* had a Being or a Name in the World, and are Joyned to the *Spirit of Error*, which Alienates from the *Pure Heavenly Light*, *Life* and *Power*, which is in Chriſt Jeſus; and ſo both *Prieſts* and *People*, while remaining in the Alienation, are under *Death*, *Darkneſs* and *Bondage*; and *Antichriſt* Reigns within them, and **Myſtery Babylon**, the *Beaſt* and *Falſe Prophet* are Within them, and the Lord's *Two Witneſſes*, his *Light* and *Spirit*, lie Slain in the Streets of the *Great City*, which Spiritually is called *Sodom* and *Egypt*, and is *Within* them, tho' they know it not. And here they Crucifie the *Lord of Life and Glory*, while they Outwardly Profeſs *Faith* in Him; Here they Condemn and Kill the *Juſt One*, while they pretend to Magnifie Him, in their Doctrines, Worſhips and Ordinances; which being *Pictures* without *Life*, *Shadows* without the *Subſtance*, and *Broken Ciſterns* that will hold no *Water*, cannot yield any True *Refreſhment* or *Satisfaction* to the Travelling and Thirſty Soul.

This is no Raſh or Inconſiderate *Charge*, but a Sober *Teſtimony* and *Declaration*, Springing from that *Experience*, which I have had of them in Days that are paſt; when I was, as many others now are, ſeeking the *Living* among the *Dead*, and

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running from *Hill* to *Mountain*, from one *Empty Form* to another, to find out that which my Soul desired, *Rest*, *Peace*, and *Satisfaction*; but 'twas not there to be had.

But Blessed for Ever be the Name of the Lord, who was pleased to shew *Mercy* to me in that Seeking and Distressed Day, and to Open the Way of *Life* and *Salvation* to me, in his Son Christ Jesus; whom I was looking for *Without*, in *Duties* and *Performances*, Begun, Continued, and Ended, in my own Will and Time; but, *behold*, he was not there.

But some may ask, *Where then was he?* I answer, He was **within**; there He met with me, and there I found the *Beloved of my Soul*, the *Chiefest of Ten Thousand*. For as I was inabled to Turn my Mind *Inward*, to the *Manifestation* of his *Light and Spirit in my Heart*, and to Give up in Obedience thereunto; so I come to have my Understanding *Opened* by Him, and to *See* Him to be my Only and Alone *Saviour*, as I dilligently Attended to him in that Heavenly Appearance.

Now the *Way*, through which it pleased the Lord to Lead me, (and I Testifie for God, 'tis the *Way* that all his *Redeemed Ones* must Travel, as to the Kind and Nature of it) was through *Judgment*, Judging down the *Man of Sin*, and the *Transgressing Nature*, and bringing that into Subjection which would not have the *Right Heir* to Reign over me. And as this *Judging Work* went forward, which was Terrible to Flesh and Blood; *For the Day of the Lord burn'd as an Oven*, and he was like a *Refiner's Fire*, and as *Fuller's Sope*; my Soul was made to Bow down before him, and to love his Righteous Judgments, and willingly to bear the *Indignation of the Lord*, because I had *Sinned against him*. Now his *Rebukes* were Sweet, and his *Chastisements* Pleasant to me. *For in mine Affliction, He was Afflicted, and the Angel of his Presence sustain'd me*, and bore me up, or I had Fainted when he turn'd his Hand upon me. But this was his Love and Kindness to me, That he might *Purge away my Dross*, and *Take away my Tin*, and make me fit to offer up unto him an Offering in *Righteousness*. Glory, Glory, be Ascribed unto him for Ever!

Now if Men would be in a *State*, Rightly Qualified, to perform *Acceptable Worship* to the Lord, *to offer unto him an Offering*

ing in Righteouſneſs; They muſt firſt come to know *Redemption* through *Judgment*, and a *Purging* by the *Great Refiner*, as of *Gold* and *Silver*. And as this *Purging* or *Cleanſing* comes to be Experienced, ſo they will be fit to Compaſs the *Altar of the Lord*, and to Pay their Vows to the *moſt High God*. Then, and not till then, will the *Oblations* of any, whether under this or the other *External Form*, be pleaſant to the Lord.

Now 'tis the Earneſt Deſire of my Soul, unto the God of my Life, That all the *Outward Worſhippers*, of every Denomination, might come to Witneſs ſuch a *State*, wherein their Offerings may be Acceptable unto the Lord, *viz.* a *State of Redemption from Iniquity*, and *Purgation from Sin*: For, for this Purpoſe the Son of God was manifeſted, that *he might Deſtroy the Works of the Devil, Redeem from all Iniquity, and Purifie unto himſelf a Peculiar People, Zealous of Good Works.*

And it is my *Teſtimony* this Day, which the Lord my God hath given me to bear for his Name, That whoever would come to Witneſs this *State of Redemption*, both from *Sin* and *Unacceptable Worſhip*, they muſt come to the *Light of Chriſt Jeſus* in their own Hearts, and Wait Patiently upon the Lord therein. For this is the *Way* to it, as 'tis Recorded in the *Scriptures of Truth*, and Manifeſted unto me by the *Holy Spirit*; Neither is there another for any of the Sons and Daughters of Men.

Therefore I Earneſtly Beſeech all that may be concerned in this *Teſtimony*, to Turn *Immediately*, to the *Light of Chriſt Jeſus* Within them: For *Chriſt Within* is the *Hope of Glory*. And I Preſs it ſo much the more upon them, becauſe I have had *Experience* in my Meaſure of the *Divine Power* and *Virtue* that is in it; and becauſe I know it is the Day of *God's Great* and *Univerſal Love* to the Children of Men, wherein he would *have all Men to be Saved, and to come unto the Knowledge of the Truth*. *Jeruſalem* had a Day, and ſo have all the *Nations* and *Families* of the Earth. Cloſe therefore Immediately with the Preſent *Invitation* of God: *For, behold, Now is the Accepted Time: Behold, Now is the Day of Salvation.*

Richard Claridge.

FINIS.